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## **Quitting Smoking during Pregnancy Isn't Easy: The Great American Smokeout Can Help**

**Eau Claire, WI** – In **Eau Claire** the Health Department is encouraging people to celebrate the Great American Smokeout (GASO) in the best way possible -- by quitting smoking or making a plan to quit. The Great American Smokeout encourages smokers to use the day to make a plan to quit, or to plan in advance and quit smoking that day. By quitting, even for one day, smokers will be taking an important step towards a healthier life. There are many benefits to being smoke free! For pregnant women, these benefits extend to their unborn baby. In 2011, 12.2% of women in Wisconsin reported smoking during the last 3 months of pregnancy.

As soon as a pregnant woman quits smoking, the baby starts getting more oxygen. The risks of miscarriage and stillbirth decrease, and the risk of the baby being born early or with a low birth weight decreases.

The benefits to the baby continue once it is born. Babies born to moms who have quit smoking are less fussy. They have fewer lung diseases such as asthma, and they get fewer colds and ear infections. They also have less risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

The benefits to mom include pride in doing what is best for herself and her baby as well as more energy to take care of and play with baby once it is born. Moms who quit smoking also are less likely to have postpartum depression. Clothes, hair, and homes smell better.

“Quitting smoking has immediate benefits to moms and babies and tremendous lifelong health benefits for both moms and their children,” states Lieske Giese, Health Department Director, “It’s one of the most important changes a woman can make for herself and her family.”

Quitting smoking early in pregnancy reaps the greatest benefits, but quitting at any time in pregnancy yields benefits. Wherever you are in your pregnancy, **NOW** is the best time to quit. Public Health Nurses at the Health Department are trained to help pregnant women in their quitting attempts through the First Breath program. The First Breath program uses a best-practice, counseling-based approach to aid smokers in their quit attempt. If you are pregnant and interested in quitting smoking, please contact the health department.

Eau Claire County health advocates urge anyone who smokes to call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT NOW for free help to quit smoking.

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